



Arlington  
Public  
Schools

School Health Advisory Board

# ANNUAL REPORT

2017



## PROGRAM PROFILE

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The School Health Advisory Board\* assists the School Board and APS senior staff with the development of health policies in Arlington Public Schools and the evaluation of the status of school health, health education, and the school environment and health services as described in Virginia [law](#).

### WHAT ISSUES DOES SHAB ADDRESS?

- Improving students' health and ability to learn in all Arlington Schools and Programs.
- Working to understand and mitigate high rates of chronic disease among APS students (in particular asthma, severe allergic reactions, and obesity).
- How to reduce absenteeism and lost education time caused by chronic and communicable diseases.
- Ensuring sufficient physical activity and outdoor play for student wellness.
- Highlighting the importance of healthy eating as a foundation for good health.
- Emphasizing the need for adequate sleep for school success.
- Factors that affect Socio-emotional wellbeing.
- Ensuring safe physical and emotional environments to learn and grow.
- Highlighting the importance of staff wellness.

\*The SHAB Leadership team consists of two parent co-chairs, the Assistant Superintendent for Education and Instruction (or designee), the DHS School Health Bureau Chief, and the DHS School Health Physician. Additional APS senior staff, School Health Supervisors, and parents who chair or co-chair SHAB subcommittees typically attend bi-monthly leadership meetings. Interested parents and community members attend the bi-monthly general meetings. The SHAB member roster can be viewed at: <http://apsshab.weebly.com/shab-members.html>

The work of SHAB is typically conducted in between meetings through 6 subcommittees/workgroups:

1. Allergy and Anaphylaxis
2. Environmental Health and Asthma
3. Nutrition and Physical Activity
4. Socio-Emotional Health
5. Assessment and Best Practices
6. Whole Child Initiative (6 SHAB members participated in the Whole Child Framework Development Workgroup)

Website: [apsshab.weebly.com/](http://apsshab.weebly.com/)

Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/apsshab/](http://www.facebook.com/apsshab/)

## Health in the Schools

The Health Department School Health Bureau's latest data reports are concerning. More than 1 in 5 APS students have a chronic health condition, with Asthma being the most common (2,400+) followed by Food Allergies (1600+). Rates of both conditions have increased much faster than the increase in student population in recent years. Analysis of data from one elementary school showed that children with asthma missed *twice* as many school days compared to students without asthma. In addition, the percentage of students with serious food allergies has increased by 84% over the past 5 years, and many of these students require "Epipens" in school and on field trips to help treat a serious reaction and risk to life and health. APS students visited the 34 clinics more than 145,000 times last year; 26,800 of this total (18.5%) was to receive daily or emergency medications.

Prevention and a safe food environment are the most effective ways to prevent serious illness. Infectious diseases occur throughout the year, but outbreaks are more common in the late fall and winter months. More than 20 outbreaks occurred last year in programs and in elementary, middle and high schools, most commonly caused by gastrointestinal pathogens such as norovirus or respiratory pathogens such as influenza. Because there is no vaccine for norovirus, and the vaccine for influenza provides only moderate protection, the importance of basic actions such as hand-washing, covering one's cough, not sharing food and liquids, and staying home when sick remain critically important to slow down and control outbreaks.

## 2017 PROGRESS

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### New Wellness Policy and Policy Implementation Procedures

In April 2017 SHAB received notice that VDOE Superintendent's Memo [#114-17](#), required changes to the existing APS Wellness Policy ("25-3 Support for Student Wellness"). The memorandum provided information and resources to assist each local education agency (LEA) that participates in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program in developing a Local Wellness Policy (LWP) that meets the newly expanded requirements outlined in the final rule of the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*. This act passed by Congress was released to expand the scope of the LWP by adding new provisions related to implementation, evaluation, and publicly reporting the progress. The intent is to strengthen LWPs so they become useful tools in evaluating, establishing, and maintaining healthy school environments, and to provide transparency to the public on key areas that affect the nutrition environment in each school.

APS had to fully comply with the requirements of the final rule by June 30, 2017. This required frequent meetings, phone calls, and online collaboration and editing of draft documents by the SHAB leadership team, resulting in the School Board's adoption of a new Wellness Policy on June 29, 2017, followed in short order by development of an updated and more comprehensive Policy Implementation Procedures (PIP) which was finalized on July 27, 2017.

The new Wellness Policy and PIP will launch a new focus on wellness and the Whole Child. Notable changes include:

1. Each school will form a Wellness Council, led by the school principal or assistant principal, who

will have the authority and responsibility to report on the school's compliance and inform the school community about wellness activities. Wellness Councils should be broadly inclusive and include teachers of physical education, school nurses, counselors, food service staff, parents, students, and others.

2. Schools will complete a standardized assessment instrument during the 2017-18 school year and every three years thereafter. A Wellness Policy Leadership Team will review and aggregate these results to assess compliance with the wellness policy and progress toward improved wellness, and will report results to the School Board.
3. Annual reports will be provided to the public and will include a description of each school's progress in meeting Wellness Policy goals; a summary of each school's local wellness events or activities; contact information for the leader(s) of the Wellness Policy Team; and information about how individuals and the public can get involved.

**Wellness Policy:** <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/25-3-Support-for-Students-Wellness-1.pdf>

**Policy Implementation Procedures:** <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/25-3-support-for-students-wellness-PIP.pdf>

**Superintendent's Memo:**

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents\\_memos/2017/114-17.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2017/114-17.shtml)

### Allergy/Anaphylaxis Guidelines Dissemination

School Health responded to 6 cases of anaphylaxis in the 2016/17 school year, providing epinephrine to 5 students and 1 APS staff member. So far in the 2017/18 school year, 5 students have required epinephrine for anaphylaxis. Of the cases so far this year, 3 were not known to have allergies. In order to support schools and families and meet national guidelines, a workgroup of SHAB comprised of health professionals, DHS and APS staff, and parents of food-allergic students drafted food allergy guidelines incorporating best practices from CDC and other local school districts. "Management and Support of Students With Severe Allergies in Arlington Public Schools" was released in September 2016 on the SHAB website. The guidelines are helping APS staff and parents negotiate adequate protections for students at risk of anaphylaxis. For example, Jamestown Elementary, where 13% of the school population is affected by food allergies, progressed from having several "nut-free classrooms" to having a no peanuts or tree nuts policy in all classrooms.

The Guidelines are voluntary and require continued support and commitment from the School Board and staff for successful implementation. While many schools already follow some of the best practices for managing severe allergies, there is not a consistent, centralized approach to allergy management. Implementing the Severe Allergy Guidelines provides a framework for all schools to follow best practices regarding allergy management. Especially important are:

- An increased emphasis on staff training. All staff should be trained in prevention, signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis, and emergency management including the administration of epinephrine. It is important that school administrators take a lead role with this and partner with the Public Health Nurse to schedule adequate time at the beginning of the school year for this training.

- An emphasis on non-food treats for celebrations is a key allergy prevention measure as well as good health and wellness practice, now strongly encouraged by the new Wellness Policy.
- Classroom teachers who have students with food allergies in their class should send a letter home to all parents not to send in foods containing identified allergens for snacks or lunches.
- Encourage hand washing as the most effective way to eliminate allergens. Hand sanitizer does not eliminate allergens.
- Ensure proper cleaning of lunchroom tables according to established cleaning procedures.

**ACTION REQUESTED →**

With resources or support from APS staff, SHAB would like to:

1. Translate the guidelines into Spanish.
2. Design a cover and format the document for look and feel to match APS materials as desired.
3. Print copies and distribute (at least one per school, one copy for each Extended Day office and one copy for each nurses' office).
4. Create a dedicated page on the APS website for the Guidelines.

Feedback is welcome from parents, staff and community. Please review the Guidelines document at: <http://apsshah.weebly.com/food-allergy-guidelines.html>

### Hand Washing Policy Implementation

The SHAB Environmental Health and Asthma Subcommittee (EHAS) crafted a Hand Washing Policy in 2016 with diverse stakeholder input and national best practice recommendations. It is included in the Wellness Policy and PIP and was promoted in early 2017 by an announcement in School Talk. Implementation challenges include: lack of awareness about the policy, inadequate number of sinks and time before and after lunch and recess to wash hands, and lack of buy-in among staff. A hand washing reminder in the school handbook did not mention WHEN hand washing should happen. EHAS notes that for the policy to be followed with fidelity, hand washing must be integrated intentionally into the school day. Principals need to include time for hand washing after recess, before meals and after meals in their master schedules. EHAS supports regular reminders about the Hand Washing Policy be made to the entire APS community each fall, winter and spring and suggests that all students receive instruction on proper hand washing technique at least once each year from their school nurse or another qualified staff member.

**ACTION REQUESTED →**

1. Revise the APS handbook to include when hand washing should happen, and send messages to teachers, staff and parents with these guidelines 3 times per year, or at least during the winter illness months.
2. Provide multiple examples for staff on how to teach about hand washing, and how to integrate hand washing throughout the busy school day.
3. School construction and remodeling efforts should include installation of trough sinks, particularly in or near cafeterias.

The SHAB website includes a page about the hand washing policy and evidence for hand washing to prevent disease and absenteeism in schools: <http://apsshab.weebly.com/hand-washing-policy.html>

### Promoting Healthy Eating and Exercise

At the request of the Superintendent, School Health created a handbook of healthy eating and physical activity best practices within APS. "A Practice-based Health and Fitness Toolkit for Improving Educational Outcomes" was released in July 2017 and published on the SHAB website. Some of the activities advocated for and promoted by SHAB in the last year include:

- Farm to School Days (lunchroom visits by local farmers with organic produce samples) rotating across all APS elementary and middle schools
- Food in Classroom Policies and Non-Food Treats for Celebrations Policies
- Growing the participation rates for school breakfast
- Walk and Bike to School Days
- Kinesthetic classrooms: Wobble/fidgeting chairs, pedal desks or standup desks
- Mindfulness meditation and yoga
- School employee physical activity and farm to school participation to improve wellness and model healthy behaviors
- Expanded recess and/or movement breaks throughout the day and outdoor play
- School gardens and garden-to-table lessons
- Outdoor learning experiences

The Toolkit can be accessed at:

[apsshab.weebly.com/uploads/3/1/1/8/31180127/health\\_and\\_fitness\\_toolkit\\_july2017.pdf](http://apsshab.weebly.com/uploads/3/1/1/8/31180127/health_and_fitness_toolkit_july2017.pdf)

### Asthma and Vehicle Idling

Arlington air quality has gotten an "F" from the American Lung Association in recent years. Children are affected by air pollution more dramatically than adults. Breathing in ozone irritates and inflames the lungs. For the health of all children, and especially considering the rise in asthma rates noted above, the Environmental Health and Asthma Subcommittee (EHAS) is working to raise awareness about the impact of vehicle idling on the environment and children's health and to create a reduction in vehicle idling, especially around schools.

The EHAS workgroup circulated an idling survey in spring 2016 that received more than 160 responses from over 30 schools. Results reflected a significant concern about vehicle idling with over 50 percent of respondents observing cars idling at schools for at least three minutes frequently or daily. Also identified as problems were cars idling more than 20 minutes at a time around school start and dismissal times, and school buses idling both on and off of school property. Additionally, participants raised concerns about idling around youth activities at community centers and evening events at schools. Participants largely supported anti-idling signage and education campaigns.

After making the results of the survey public, a subgroup of EHAS began an awareness campaign. The group organized a Clean Air Challenge opportunity for students to submit creative Public Service Announcements promoting clean air habits, including carpooling, taking the bus or walking/biking to

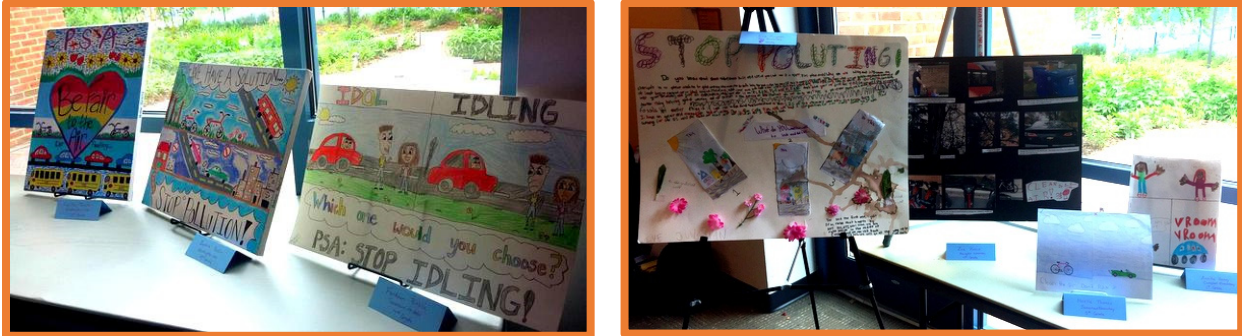
school and not idling vehicles. More than 33 students from 13 schools participated in the challenge and were recognized at a Clean Air Awareness Month Celebration held at Arlington Central Library on May 1, 2017. The event drew more than 80 attendees and hosted community groups, including Arlington Transportation Partners, Bike Arlington, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment, Moms Clean Air Force, the American Lung Association and others.



Speakers included County Board Vice Chair Katie Cristol, School Board Member Barbara Kanninen, School Physician Dr. Sam Stebbins, Elenor Hodges of [Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment](#), Levi Novey of the [Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Sustainability](#) and APS superintendent Dr. Patrick Murphy, who presented certificates of recognition to the students who had submitted creative PSAs.



Visual art PSAs were on display and video PSAs were shown at the event.



An EHAS member has applied for a grant to continue the awareness campaign, which might include signs and education materials for schools, a community training around clean air issues, and screening of the documentary *Idle Threat* in 2018-19. EHAS has also met with the APS Director of Transportation and supports funding toward replacement of old buses and retrofitting of buses older than 2007 to reduce their Particulate Matter emissions.

**ACTION REQUESTED →**

Given the poor air quality in Arlington and the tremendous cost to APS of bus idling and to all personal vehicle of idling, EHAS encourages the School Board to:

1. Declare APS a No-Idle District and work with SHAB and other agencies to educate parents about the negative impact of idling on children’s health and the environment.
2. Promote zero tolerance for APS bus drivers violating the 5-minute idling limit.
3. Approve funding for replacement of old school buses or retrofitting of buses older than 2007 to reduce their Particulate Matter emissions.

To learn more about EHAS’s anti-idling and clean air work, visit <https://apsshah.weebly.com/clean-air-resources.html>

**MOVING FORWARD: New SHAB Priorities This Year**

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SHAB has a busy year planned with multiple priorities, but the primary goal is to successfully launch and implement the new Wellness Policy and PIP while maintaining SHAB’s advisory and expert role in the wellness process. As the School Board and APS staff develop and launch a strategic plan centered on the Whole Child, SHAB hopes to continue to link its activities with the “healthy” part of Whole Child.

**Indoor Air Quality**

Although only APS-provided cleaning materials are approved for use in APS schools and the new Wellness Policy and PIP stipulates scented products and air fresheners are not to be used in school, parents note that many teachers do use these scented products, which can trigger asthma and respiratory distress or cause other ill health symptoms, including headache, fatigue, skin irritation and nausea. The many negative health repercussions of scented products and other VOC-containing



products are addressed in the articles compiled on the new EHAS Indoor Air Quality Resources page: [apsshab.weebly.com/ehas---indoor-air-quality-resources.html](http://apsshab.weebly.com/ehas---indoor-air-quality-resources.html)

#### **ACTION REQUESTED →**

1. Distribute via School Talk language drafted by EHAS to educate parents and staff about the hazards of scented products and the fact that they should not be used in schools.
2. Ask Principals to remind teachers and custodial staff that plug-ins, candles, sprays and other air fresheners are not permitted in classrooms.

#### **Asthma and Absenteeism**

Some 9.5% of APS students have asthma. The rate rose 69% over three years between 2009-2010 and 2013-2014, a time period when school population increase was just 20%. A pilot study undertaken at one elementary school in 2016-17 by School Health revealed that a diagnosis of asthma corresponds to higher rates of absenteeism. School Health plans to do a more comprehensive review across APS schools to determine the extent of the connection.

#### **Turf Fields**

Given the concerns locally in other districts and nationwide about the safety of artificial turf fields, EHAS plans to research the issue and advocate for the healthiest possible solution. EHAS has begun to compile links to resources toward further investigation of the topic. This list can be found at [apsshab.weebly.com/turf-fields.html](http://apsshab.weebly.com/turf-fields.html).

SHAB/EHAS hopes to partner with Arlington Tech High School to undertake an inventory of fields in Arlington County to ascertain how old they are, what they are made of, their current hardness ratings, and how long they are expected to last.

#### **SHAB Liaisons**

SHAB is planning to request that all schools identify staff liaisons to SHAB, preferably Assistant Principals. Liaisons would not be required to attend SHAB meetings, but would be responsible for pushing SHAB updates out to their school community and reporting back. SHAB is looking at the Special Education liaison plan as an example, and looks forward to School Board support of this important organizational measure. This structure should complement the new requirement that schools create Wellness Councils, and SHAB stands ready to provide schools, through these liaisons, technical assistance in meeting their wellness goals.

#### **Other SHAB Priorities This Year**

- Staffing schools with one full-time school nurse per school, to meet national guidelines.
- Educating about the importance of our students getting adequate sleep, and advocating for school start times that mirror changing national standards.
- Limiting screen time, including limiting the use of iPads in elementary school.
- Maximizing unstructured recess time and maximizing movement during indoor recess.
- Educating about the importance of movement throughout the day, including active hands-on lessons in the classroom, movement breaks between classroom activities, and outdoor learning opportunities.

- Ensuring that APS is promoting healthy eating choices and not using unhealthy food - candy, soft drinks, etc. - as a reward.
- Supporting and monitoring middle and high school efforts to curb substance abuse (SHAB co-chair is a member of the new Yorktown High School Substance Abuse Task Force).

## SUMMARY OF SCHOOL BOARD/APS ACTION ITEMS →

### Food Allergy Guidelines

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### Air Quality - Bus and Automobile Idling

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